

All Glory to Sree Sree Guru and Gaurāṅga

Essays on
Guru Tattva
*The Ontology of the
Spiritual Master*

His Divine Grace
Sreela Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Goswāmi Mahārāj

Sree Chaitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh (Regd.)

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April 5, 2017 Wednesday
Chaitra 22, 1938 Śakābda

On the most auspicious day of

Sree Rāma Navami and 93rd Vyāsaṇṇjā of

His Divine Grace
Sreela Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Goswāmi Mahārāj



❧ Preface ❧

Nearly two decades ago, our Most Revered Gurudeva Sreela Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Goswāmi Mahārāj compiled an article on the subject of Guru Tattva and the absolute necessity of surrender to the preceptorial channel (paramparā) on the highest path of spiritual welfare. It was published in two separate articles in the 1997-98 issue of ‘Sree Chaitanya Vāñī’, a Beṅgālī devotional magazine established in 1961 by His beloved Gurudeva, Sreela Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Goswāmi Mahārāj.

Subsequently, Sreela Gurudeva translated and further elucidated one of the articles into English. The result was published in ‘Sree Chaitanya Vāñī’ in the 1998-99 issue. In 1999, Sree Chaitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh issued the first edition of the book entitled ‘Guru Tattva’ and it was highly acclaimed by both novice and advanced devotees.

The present book consists of these two articles on Guru Tattva. ‘Essay one’ is Sreela Gurudeva’s previously published article. ‘Essay two’ is the translation of the second part of the original Beṅgālī article made possible by the causeless

mercy of Sreela Gurudeva.

Many of his disciples contributed in various stages like translation, verification, editing and proof-reading. Although we have tried our best to keep the translation close to Sreela Gurudeva's original work, due to our material conditioning, the possibility of errors cannot be negated. We offer prayers to the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas to forgive any mistakes we have committed knowingly or unknowingly.

Ultimately we pray that our Most Munificent Sreela Gurudeva, the Absolute Counterpart of Supreme Lord Sree Kṛṣṇa, may be pleased by this small effort and empower us to offer more such service.

*Praying for his grace,
the publishers*

❧ Foreword ❧

Serving the lotus feet of Sreela Gurudeva is our foremost necessity. In this world, we even need a guru to perform material activities (karma), to acquire knowledge (jñāna) or to fulfill desires not connected to serving Kṛṣṇa (anyābhilāṣa). The guidance of such worldly gurus engenders insignificant results, which are the antithesis of the results bestowed by the lotus feet of a bona fide guru. Sreela Gurudeva is the source of our genuine welfare. The very moment we become bereft of his mercy, diverse worldly desires manifest in our hearts. And if the vartma-pradarśaka guru, who is the first to tell us about spiritual life, does not tell us how we should take shelter of the lotus feet of Sreela Gurudeva, we may end up losing the gem in hand.

Chanting Sree Kṛṣṇa's names (nāma-bhajana) is the sole method of performing bhajana, and it is the only method Sreela Gurudeva confers upon us. Sreela Rūpa Goswāmi says:

*guru-padāśrayas tasmāt
kṛṣṇa-dīkṣādi-śikṣaṇam*

*viśrambheṇa guroḥ sevā
sādhū-vartma 'nuvartanam*

The first four limbs of sādhana-bhakti are: to accept the shelter of the lotus feet of a bona fide guru, to take dīkṣā and receive instructions on service to Sree Kṛṣṇa from him, to serve him with intimacy and affection and to follow the path of the sādhus, under his guidance.

(Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.74)

In a realm that is concealed and mystifying, it is impossible to proceed by depending on one's own multitude of competencies. Just as it is impossible to foresee the future or making plans for the future on the strength of one's own ability, similarly, mundane conceptions cannot help one penetrate or attain the supra-mundane realm. My senses have experience something of the time that has already passed, and therefore I have knowledge of it, but I remain ignorant about the future. In the same way, our current senses are incapable of informing us about that realm that is complete and inconceivable. Our eyes can only see a few miles into the distance, and our ears can only hear words spoken nearby.

If we depend on our own competence to proceed in such a realm, we will never reach the far end, the Ultimate Reality. Such an attempt is likened to Rāvaṇa's efforts to build a stairway to heaven. Construction may begin, but it will eventually crumble to the ground. It cannot exist in a void where no support is present. Similarly we desire to ascend to that unknown realm, and we try to do so on the strength of our own competence, but we always fail. Furthermore, if we consider an ordinary mortal who is spiritually impotent and not at all grave (laghu) to be guru (weighty with potency), we face failure.

We will have to recognize who is guru and who is laghu. A guru is engaged in service to that Complete Entity whom all real gurus honor as their sole object of worship. This does not refer to a guru (teacher) of sitar or physical exercises. Such a guru cannot save one from the clutches of death.

*gurur na sa syāt sva-jano na sa syāt
pitā na sa syāj jananī na sā syāt
daivaṁ na tat syān na patiś ca sa syān
na mocayed yaḥ samupeta-mṛtyum*

That guru is not a guru, that father is not a father, that

mother is not a mother, that demigod is not a demigod and that relative is not a relative who cannot protect us from the clutches of death, cannot bestow eternal life upon us and cannot protect us from ignorance, because of which we are deeply engrossed in this material world.

(Sreemad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.18)

Ignorance is the sole reason a person falls into the clutches of death; a person with knowledge does not. All the education in the world is immediately dispensable for one who becomes mad or paralyzed or who meets with death. Unless we are searching for the ultimate truth, we tend to become unconscious, or devoid of real consciousness.

When we are impelled to enjoy our senses, like the tongue, hands, legs, arms and genitals, we are enchanted and then deceived. It is therefore imperative upon us to remember Sree Guru-pāda-padma at the beginning of each year, each month, and each day and at every moment, for he can protect us from all such deception.

Our Gurudeva's forms are manifold. If he did not manifest himself in various ways, then who else would protect us? That person whom my Gurudeva has accepted as his own is my saviour. I do not want to see the faces of vile

persons who criticize my Gurudeva or who support those who criticize him. They are the cause of all inauspiciousness.

The very instant I deviate from or forget the lotus feet of Sreela Gurudeva, who is continuously attracting me to his lotus feet, at that very moment I am unquestionably deprived of the Truth. Upon such deviation, I became engrossed in contemplating countless scarcities. I hurry to bathe in a holy place, and I become busy protecting myself from the cold. In this way I chase after activities other than service to Sreela Gurudeva.

My Gurudeva constantly protects me from dvitīya-abhiniveṣa—becoming absorbed in activities separate from the interest of Bhagavān. If I do not remember my Gurudeva at the beginning of each year, each month, each day, and at every moment, I will surely fall further away from the path of bhakti. Consequently, I myself will wish to be recognized as guru, and the sinister contemplation of how others will worship me will invade my mind. This alone is dvitīya-abhiniveṣa.

Sree Gaurasundara is Sree Kṛṣṇa Himself Who came to this Earth as jagad-guru, the spiritual master of the whole world, and spoke Śikṣāṣṭaka. May the exalted, manifest gurus (mahanta-gurus) and all great Vaiṣṇavas who are

surrendered to their lotus feet, impart all aspects of the teachings of Śikṣāṣṭaka to us. May they deliver us from our calamitous situation.

*Excerpts from a lecture delivered by: Sree Sreemad Bhakti
Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda*

(Reproduced from bvml.org)

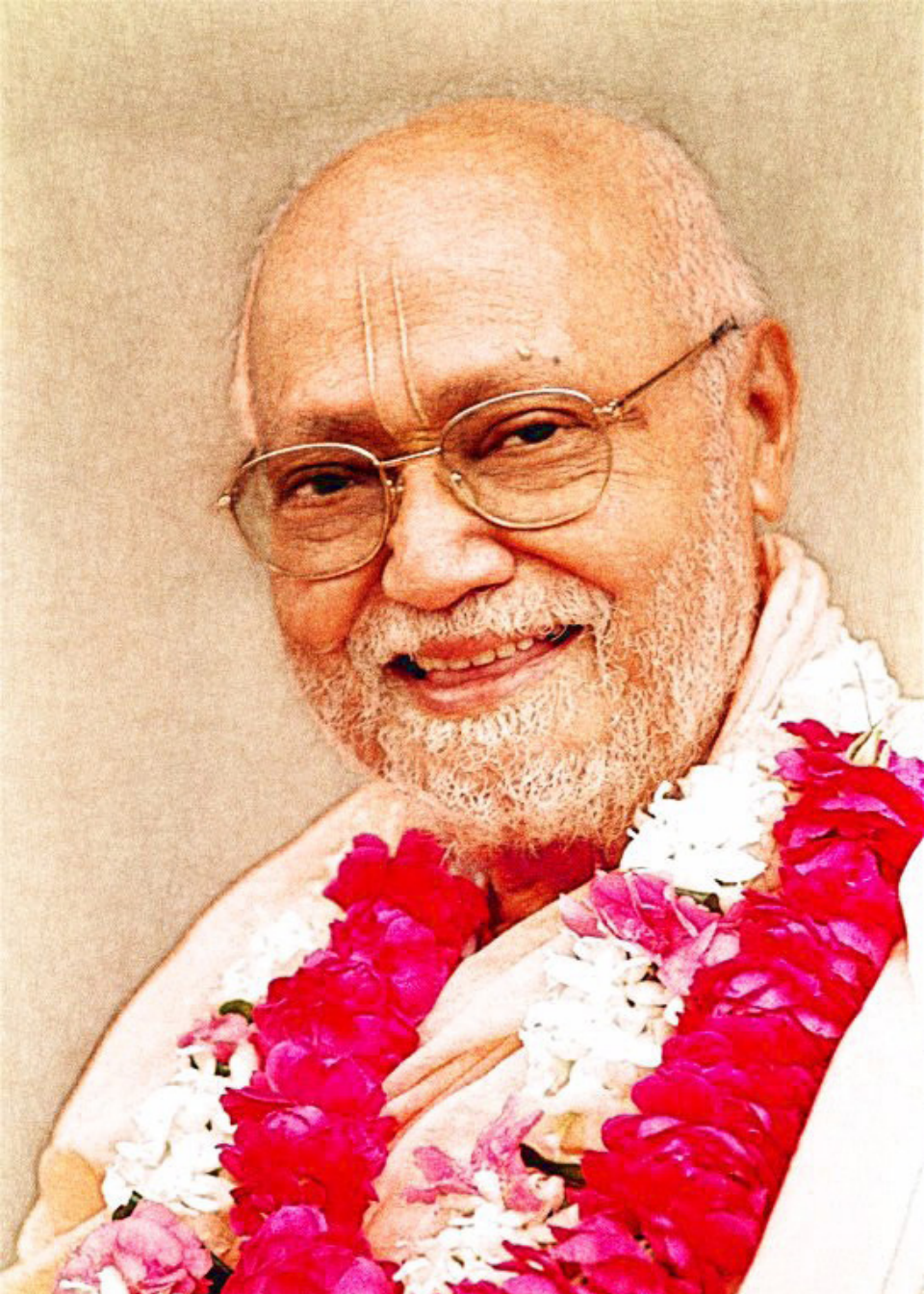
Supreme Lord says,

“One should know the āchārya as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods.”

(Sreemad Bhāgavatam 11.17.27)

“So-called family Gurus, only claiming to get mantra through right preceptorial channel, cannot achieve their own eternal benefit and have no capacity to bestow eternal benefit to others. Practical life realization is essential for being a sad-guru.”

His Divine Grace
Sreela Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Goswāmi Mahārāj,
President Āchārya of Sree Chaitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh

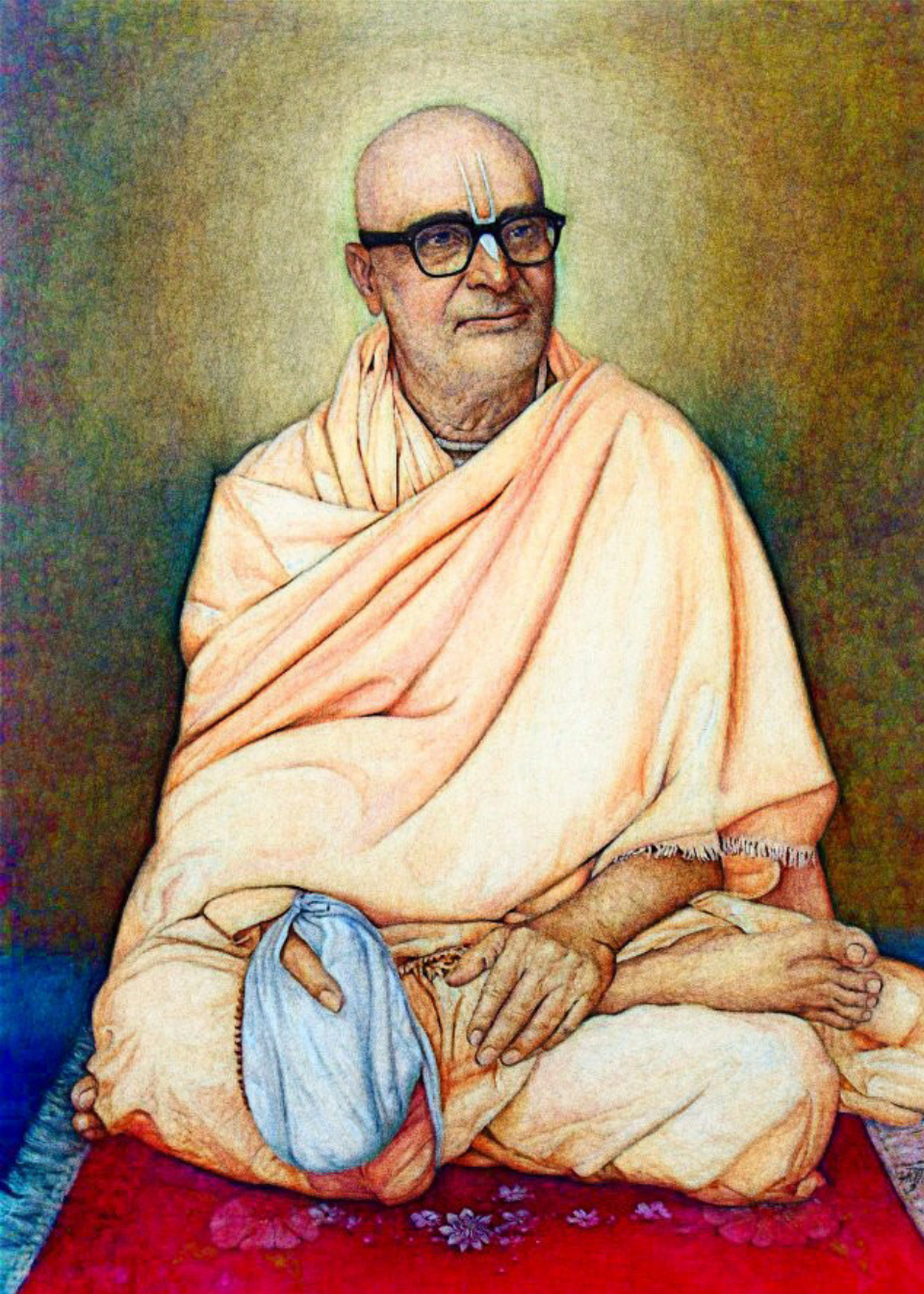


“The spiritual master is that form of the Supreme Lord in which the Lord manifests Himself before us and instructs us how to serve Him. The spiritual master accepts the purport of all the scriptures, acts accordingly and teaches others to do the same. On giving the matter due consideration, we will come to understand that the original spiritual master is Śreematī Rādhikā.”

His Divine Grace

Sreela Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Goswāmi Mahārāj

Founder Āchārya of Sree Chaitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh

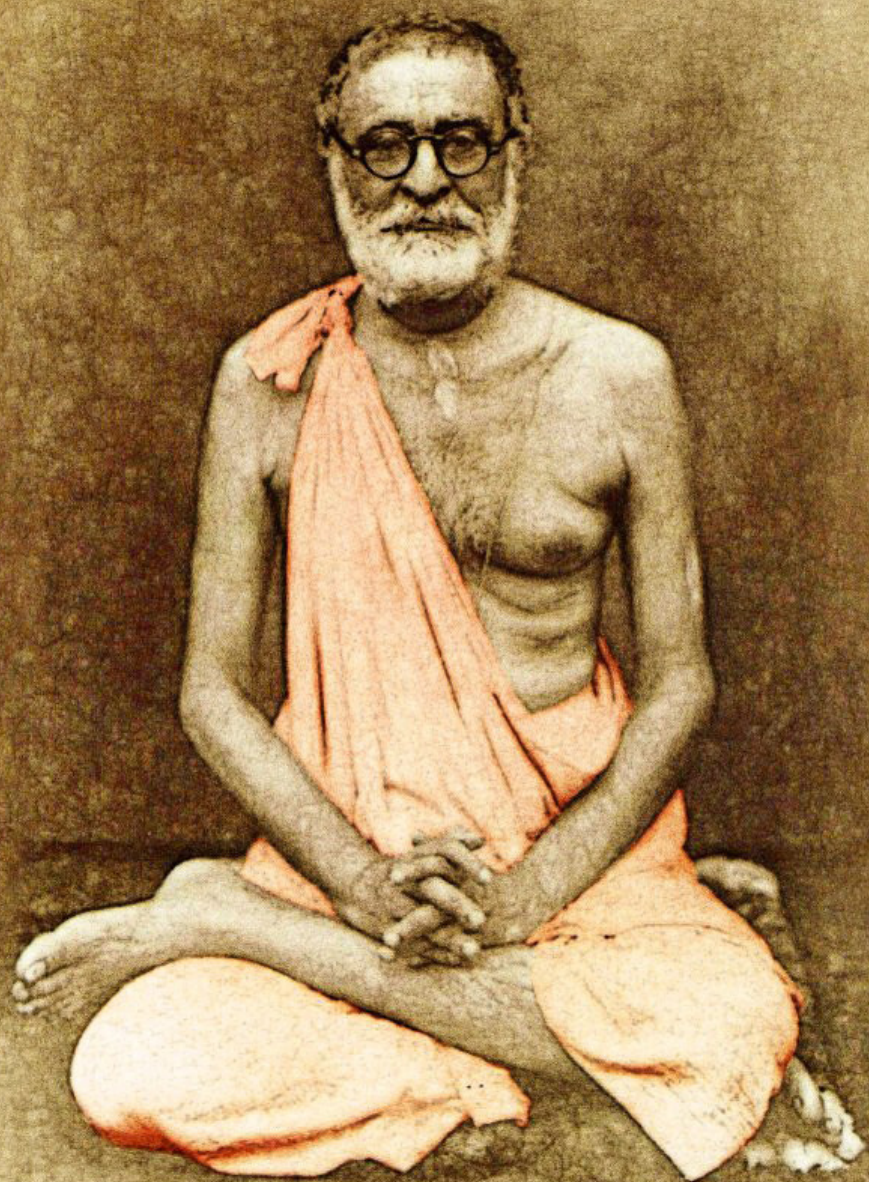


“Only that person who is endowed with pure devotion, who knows the devotional conclusions, and is of spotless character, simple, without greed, free from Māyāvāda philosophy, and expert in all activities is qualified as sad-guru.”

His Divine Grace

Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura Prabhupād

Founder Āchārya of world-wide Sree Chaitanya Maṭh and
Sree Gauḍīya Maṭh organizations



❧ Essay One ❧

Introduction

The etymological significance of the word ‘guru’ has been elaborately described in different Indian scriptures. It will not be wise to make the subject too concise by going through a theoretical scholarly discussion while overlooking the real purpose of getting—spiritual amelioration—practical realization of the Highest Bliss. Fundamental points with evidences from authentic scriptures will be delineated, relevant for devotional practice to achieve the highest objective—transcendental divine knowledge descending through the preceptorial or disciplic channel as taught by realized souls—bona fide gurus—pure devotees.

Ordinary meaning

Guru: Spiritual Master (āchārya), preceptor, professor or lecturer, advisor, teacher, instructor, initiator.

Tattva: ‘tat’ is transcendental reality which cannot be comprehended by material senses—gross or subtle. ‘tattva’

is inner significance of transcendental reality.

Spiritual interpretations

*alpam vā bahu vā yasya śrutasyopakaroti yaḥ
tam apīha gurum vidyācchrutopā-kriyayā tayā*

As per scriptural prescript, one who imparts a portion or sufficient knowledge of the Vedas to a deserving aspirant for his eternal benefit is termed guru. (*Manu-saṁhitā* 2.149)

*gu-kāraś chāndhakārah syāt ru-kāraṇaṁ nirodhakah
andhakāraṇaṁ nirodhitvāt gurur ity abhidhīyate*

The ‘gu’ syllable of the word guru denotes darkness (nescience) and the syllable ‘ru’ denotes removal of darkness. One who removes darkness, ignorance, is called guru. (*Viśvasār-tantra*)

*gu-kāraś chāndhakārah syāt ru-kāraṇaṁ teja uchyate
ajñāna nāśakam brahma gurur eva na saṁśayaḥ*

The ‘gu’ syllable signifies darkness (ignorance) and the ‘ru’ syllable light. Therefore, it is true undoubtedly that the

self-effulgent Parabrahma, whose light removes darkness, is guru. (*Viśvasār-tantra*)

*ajñāna timirāndhasya jñānānjana śalākayā
chakṣur unmīlitam yena tasmai śrī gurave namaḥ*

My prostrated obeisances to Sree Gurudeva, who opens my blind eyes removing dark nescience with the help of the eye salve of divine knowledge. (*Gauḍīya Kaṇṭhahār*)

*sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair-
uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ
kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya
vande guroḥ śrī charaṇāravindam*

Viśwanāth Chakravarty Ṭhākura has written, “The spiritual master is to be honored as much as the Supreme Lord because he is the most confident servitor of the Lord. This is acknowledged in all the revealed scriptures and followed by all the authorities. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master, who is a bona fide representative of Sree Hari.” The spiritual master (Gurudeva) is one with the Supreme Lord Sree Hari in the

sense that he is His dearest. Gurudeva is not the enjoyer Bhagavān, but he is the most confidential servitor. As such Tulasi (holy basil) leaf is offered to the lotus feet of Sree Hari, but not to the lotus feet of Gurudeva; it is offered on the upper portion of his spiritual body—on his hands.

*yasya prasādād bhagavat prasādo
yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto'pi
dhyāyam stuvaṁs tasya yaśas tri-sandhyam
vande guroḥ śrī charaṇāravindam*

Viśwanāth Chakravarty Ṭhākur has further written, “I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master while meditating and singing in adoration his glories in the morning, at midday and afternoon. By his grace one can get the grace of Supreme Lord Sree Hari and without his grace and compassion one can have no shelter.”

*śrī guru-charaṇa-padma kevala bhakati-sadma
vando muñi sāvadhāna mate
jāhāra prasāde bhāi e bhava tariyā jāi
kṛṣṇa prāpti haya jāha ha'te
guru-mukha-padma-vākya chittete kariyā aikya*

*ār nā kariha mane āśā
śrī guru-charaṇe rati ei se uttama gati
je-prasāde pūre sarva āśā
chakṣu dān dilā jei janme janme prabhu sei
divya jñān hṛde prakāśita
prema-bhaki jāhā haite avidyā vināśa jāte
vede gāya jāhāra charita*

Sree Narottam Ṭhākur has written, “The lotus feet of His Divine Grace Sree Gurudeva is the abode of exclusive devotion. I chant the glories of Sree Gurudeva in devout adoration. I can cross the ocean of births and deaths as well as get Sree Kṛṣṇa by His unfathomable grace. I should be satisfied by reconciling the nectarine sayings emerging from the lotus-lips of Gurudeva with the thoughts of my mind, nothing more can I expect to get. Devotion to the lotus feet of Sree Gurudeva is the highest objective. All desires can be fulfilled by his grace. By his grace I have got the spiritual eye to see God, divine transcendental knowledge is revealed in me. I have got prema-bhakti and my ignorance is removed, such Gurudeva may become my eternal divine master in every birth. The transcendental pastimes of Gurudeva have thus been narrated in the Vedas.”

Indispensability of accepting guru

There is a report of one community in India that does not acknowledge guru as a head for spiritual guidance. According to them God is the only guru and all others are god-brothers; the eldest god-brother is generally known as dādā-guru. This sort of conclusion is neither rational nor supported by scriptures. In this world we accept authorities or experts in all matters. When we are acknowledging guru in every sphere, it is absurd to say that we do not require the help of guru to know God, Who is beyond human comprehension. Those who say like this are really not serious to know God. The indispensability for accepting guru for God-realization is substantiated by scriptural evidence. Chāndogya Upaniṣad says: ‘āchāryavān puruṣo veda’—Only the person initiated by guru can know Parabrahma.

*uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata kṣurasya dhārā
niśītā duratyayāddurgam pathastat kavayo vadanti*

Veda (Divinity Himself) is giving beneficial instruction to the sādhus—O sādhus! Rise up (withdraw your material senses from the material objects completely,) awake (be

reinstated in your own real self,) and sincerely endeavor to know God, praying for the grace of great saints. This world is as sharp as a razor (full of miseries), and as such it is very difficult to get deliverance. It is impossible to cross the ocean of births and deaths without worship of Divinity. The realized saints say that without careful zealous efforts nobody can get God-realization, the panacea of the malady of worldly afflictions, i.e. nobody can cross the ocean of births and deaths without worship of God, taking absolute shelter at the lotus feet of Gurudeva. (*Kaṭhōpaniṣad* 1.3.14)

Even the Supreme Lord played the pastime of accepting guru to teach the indispensability of accepting guru. Sree Kṛṣṇa, Sree Gaurahari and Sree Rāmachandra accepted Sāndīpani Muni, Sree Īśwarapūrīpād and Sree Vaśiṣṭha Muni respectively as spiritual guides.

Manifestations of guru

The following is an extract from the sermon delivered by His Divine Grace Om Viṣṇupād 108 Sree Sreemad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Goswāmi Mahārāj, Founder of Sree Chaitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh (Regd.) on the holy day of his advent on Sree Utthān Ekādaśī Tithi in 1967

at Sree Chaitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh, 35, Satish Mukherjee Road, Kolkata-26:

“To me Gurudeva manifests himself in four forms:

1. Guru is one who destroys ignorance. Appearance of the Absolute Knowledge, Bhagavān, removes ignorance. Hence, original guru is Bhagavān.
2. He who has engaged me in the service of Bhagavān directly is the second appearance of my Sreela Gurudeva, Most Revered Nityalīlapraviṣṭa Prabhupād Sreemad Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi Ṭhākura, Founder of the world-wide Sree Chaitanya Maṭh and Sree Gauḍīya Maṭh organizations.
3. Vaiṣṇavas are the third appearance of Gurudeva. What do they do? As Gurudeva always engages his disciples in the service of his object of worship, Vaiṣṇavas also do the same.
4. Disciples are the fourth manifestation of guru. They, as disciples, actually do the work of a guru, i.e. they engage me always in the service of Gurudeva. There is no scope of doing any anti-devotional act of violation. If there is any violation, they will detect it. Hence, disciples

are also my guruvara. Disciples perform guru-pūja by singing the glories of Gurudeva, I perform guru-pūja by hearing. But by hearing the glories, if I have got the evil motive of misappropriating it, it will not be guru-pūja. As chanting is bhakti, hearing is also bhakti. In whatever way devotees may express their hearts, they are all my objects of worship.”

The glorious disciplic lineage

Message of His Divine Grace Nityalīla-praviṣṭa Om
108 Sree Sreemad Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī
Goswāmī Ṭhākura on the holy day (kṛṣṇa pañcamī tithi)
of his fiftieth advent anniversary at Sree Gauḍīya Maṭh,
Ultaḍanga Road, Kolkata:

[Sermons were delivered in Beṅgālī. It is difficult to understand the inner deep significance of his esoteric instructive message.]

“Redeemer Sympathisers! My Sree Gurudeva is a manifestation of the pastimes of Viṣṇu-vigraha (Godhead) as His absolute counterpart servitor. Though he is God’s dearest Viṣṇu-vigraha, yet he is dwelling in the hearts of all living beings of the world in the form of a Vaiṣṇava to rescue

a fallen soul like me.

“Gurudeva in human form, the best amongst all living beings, is my only object of worship. As a perfect man, in spite of his being a servitor of the highest object of worship of the Vaiṣṇavas, his relation with Sree Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-distinction. In consideration of his non-distinction aspect, his form is the highest object of worship. The visible world is eager to serve him, but a man like me, who is averse to God, is satisfied in thinking Gurudeva just as a perfect man. Human beings, as devotees of that perfect man, are all Vaiṣṇavas. They are manifestations of my Gurudeva in various forms. Positively they are my guruvarga and instructors; negatively they are the persons who, at the time of their performing bhajan, are very much eager to hear delirium from an abominable wretched person like me. It seems to me I am capable of reciting what I have heard from Sree Gurudeva along with them. I have got no audacity to teach the world because peculiar characteristics of viṣṇu-vaiṣṇava-tattva are incomprehensible. Although they are eternally distinct, they are at the same time non-distinct, which is inconceivable.

“I have heard from Gurudeva that all objects of worship,

all kinds of worshippers and worship itself are eternally incorporated in absolute undivided knowledge (advayajñān), Sree Kṛṣṇa. In spite of their incorporation in Sree Kṛṣṇa, they are eternal manifestations of variegatedness in divine pastimes. Myself and other living beings, who are averse to Hari-guru-vaiṣṇava, are deviated from Eternal Truth due to forgetfulness of the eternal variegated divine pastimes. I have even got no capacity correctly to understand why I have become deviated. In the context of my feeling eternity, I am an eternal servant of Sree Kṛṣṇa but I have lost remembrance that I am an eternal servant of Sree Kṛṣṇa, as I have fallen into the pit of misconception of self.

“The knowledge that I am the marginal potency of Sree Kṛṣṇa is now in a dormant state due to the above drawback. Hence, I have got this assumption that absolute bliss can be attained by aversion to the service of Sree Vrajendra Nandan Sree Kṛṣṇa, Who is All-powerful and All-knowledge. But that sort of anti-devotional attitude is opposed to the variegatedness of eternal divine pastimes. I shall commit a blunder in thinking mayāvād contention as brahmajñān.

“That wrong assumption misdirects me and deprives me from the service of Gurudeva forever. I am unable to comprehend simultaneous distinction and non-distinction

of my existence. ‘Dva suparṇa’ – these three mantras of śṛti have not been the subject-matter of my discussion. I commit offence at the lotus feet of Sree Sreedhar Swāmi, who is one with Viṣṇuswāmi, the sustainer of pure devotion, when I do not discern the manifestation of simultaneous distinction and non-distinction in their teachings, due to forgetfulness of the real self.

“I have been deprived from the loving service of my most beloved by confusing pure non-dualism (viśiṣṭādvaita) with absolute monism (kevalādvaita). I am avoiding the procedure of getting transcendental divine knowledge descending through the preceptorial channel—disciplic channel or self-effulgent knowledge of the Vedas. As such I have imbibed the false material ego of becoming a judge to determine right and wrong by inviting deep nescience due to lack of ontological devotional knowledge. It is for this reason only that I, as a non-vedist:

1. Commit offence at the lotus feet of Vaiṣṇavas by going to exaggerate the efficacy of the doctrine of action (karma vichār);
2. Conclude that the pañcha-rātrā system is anti-vedic;
3. Harm my eternal welfare by observing objects of

worship—Saṅkarṣaṇ, Pradyumna and Aniruddha as distinct from Vāsudeva;

4. Have imbibed belief in absolute monism due to my offence at the lotus feet of Śāṇḍilya Ṛṣi.

“Sreepād Pūrṇaprajña Ānandatīrtha Madhvamuni (Sree Madhvāchārya) has blessed me by manifesting his allegiance to Vedavyās in this adverse situation. I am unable to express the extent of his grace unto me for my eternal benefit. The sincere endeavor to serve the object of worship, which has been inherited from Sree Mādhavendra Pūrīpād and preserved by him in the heart of Sree Īśvara Pūrīpād, was distributed bountifully by Sree Gaurasundar to all His associates. I was so long averse to Sree Hari due to my reluctance to serve the lotus feet of Sree (Raghunāth) Dās Goswāmi, the embodiment of esoteric bhajan. Sree Dās Goswāmi’s bhajan under the benign guidance of Sreela Rūpa Goswāmi, who expanded the gospel of Divine Love, is conspicuous.

“Sree Jīva Goswāmi, following the footprints of Sree Sanātana Goswāmi, pulled me by the hair and placed me at the lotus feet of Raghunāth Dās and Swarūpa Dāmodar as their eternal servant. I have got the opportunity to realize

Sree Gurudeva as non-different from the lotus feet of Sree Narottam Ṭhākur in view of my being blessed by hearing the apophthegms flowing from the holy pen of Sreela Kavirāj Goswāmi. I am a wretched insignificant creature of the world. Sree Viśwanāth Chakravarty is making the gesture of invoking vyāsapūja by various alternative means to save me from going astray. Vedāntāchārya Sree Baladev Vidyābhūṣaṇ, who played the pastime of appearing as guru to infuse divine power to Sree Madhusūdan Dās and Sree Uddhav Dās, has rescued me from the menace of the path of logical altercation by pronouncing propriety of Vedic knowledge descending through the preceptorial channel. Sree Viśwanāth Chakravarthi Ṭhākur is perceived by his associates as custodian of the world. In that context Sree Viśwanāth appeared as the Absolute Counterpart, Grace incarnate of the Lord, to resist me in my attempt to know the Truth through empiricism. Sreela Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur—absolute counterpart, Kṛṣṇa-vigraha, who is non-different from Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vedavyāsmuni—has given me shelter at Vrajapaṭṭana (at Chandraśekhar Āchārya Bhavan—the Holy Place of Sree Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s Vrajalīlā pastimes) inside Navadvīp by his pen and devotional practice.

“My revered object of worship Sree Gaurakiśore Vighraha has graced me by drenching me with the sacred dust of his lotus feet, apprehending my spiritual fall on seeing my hasty endeavor to perceive the transcendental beauty of Sree Vraja Dhām through empiricism, thinking it to be similar to the material realm conducive to earthly enjoyment. Being adorned by the transcendental sacred dust of the transcendental Vighraha Sreela Gurudeva, I have got the arrogance to introduce myself to you today with the words from Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 5.205-207:

*jagāi mādghāi haite muñi se pāpiṣṭha
purīṣera kīṭa haite muñi se laghiṣṭha
mora nāma laya yei tāra puṇya kṣaya¹
mora nāma laya yei tāra pāpa haya
emana nirghṛṇa more kebā kṛpā kare
eka nityānanda binu jagata bhitare*

Even in comparison to the worm in the faeces, I am the lowest. Even in comparison to Jagāi-Mādghāi, I am the greatest sinner. If anybody hears my name, his virtues will

1 Sometimes written as: mora nāma śune yei tāra puṇya kṣaya

be destroyed. If anybody utters my name, surely he commits sin. Who in this universe will grace such a wretched, abominable creature like me, except Nityānanda Prabhu? Most munificent Nityānanda Vighraha, redeemer of fallen souls, Who is endowed with the quality of granting all desires like a wish yielding tree, is always protecting me in every way from aversion to Sree Hari.

“You are all true Vaiṣṇavas—the absolute counterpart manifestations of the divine opulence of my Supreme Master. I make innumerable prostrated obeisances at your feet. You are my beneficent friends, my only saviors in times of adversity. As I am nourishing aversion to Sree Kṛṣṇa by body, mind and words, thinking myself to be a living being of this visible non-eternal world created by the three primal qualities of the Lord’s external potency, I have accepted tridaṇḍa for punishing myself by engaging my body, mind and words in the service of Sree Kṛṣṇa, and this should be adopted by you to restrain me from my propensity to enjoy Kṛṣṇa. You are all Vaiṣṇava paramhamsas in this external world; kindly grace me so that I can carry the daṇḍa given by you and thereby rescue me from the influence of anti-devotional deliberations and make me competent for the worship of Sree Hari. You can fulfill infinite desires of

infinite living beings. I am a living being averse to Sree Hari, but you help me by engaging me in performing vyāsapūja with my body, mind and words thereby punishing my aversion to Sree Hari. I am a wretched creature, hence I never want to forget my allegiance to Ānandatīrtha Madhvāchārya, who is my eternal object of worship. Despite my being hated for accepting illusive dualism, I do not ever want to fall into the trap of giving up service of Vāsudeva. My great confidence is that the devout followers of Rūpa Goswāmi may offer me shelter at their lotus feet, considering me to be a servant of the two bona fide servants of Rūpa Goswāmi—non-different from and beloved of Swarūp Dāmodar, who is the second manifested form of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and the preacher of sanātan dharma as taught by Gaurasundar.”

Importance of accepting guru

Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi Ṭhākura further said: “The scarcity of Harikatha at present is certainly due to dishonor of guruvarga. Nowadays kīrtan is meant for material benefit, business interests, for the sake of money, women and name and fame. The target of kīrtan should be the gratification of the spiritual senses of

Sree Kṛṣṇa (for propitiating Hari). Sreeman Mahāprabhu said that tauryatrik—dancing, singing and playing on musical instruments—is considered indulgence in vices and therefore harmful, but if they are performed for Hari-seva (for propitiating Sree Hari and His devotees), dancing, singing and playing on musical instruments [mṛdanga, kānsar and karatāl] are the best forms of devotion. Nowadays kīrtan is transformed into vyaśana—a kind of recreation and amusement.”

We have got the aptitude to endeavor to get a thing when we feel its efficacy and necessity. Similarly when we understand the importance of accepting guru, we shall naturally try to get a spiritual guide and shall search for a bona fide guru. A scriptural evidence in regard to this is referred to here from Sreemad Bhāgavatam—the quintessence of all scriptures—11th Canto, Nimi-Nava-yogendra saṁvād (a dialog between Emperor Nimi and nine renowned saints: Once, nine young sons of Sree Ṛṣabhadeva, known as Navayogendra², set their holy footprints at the sacrificial site of Sree Nimi, the emperor of Videha. Emperor Nimi

2 Navayogendra: Kavi, Haviḥ, Antarikṣa, Prabuddha, Pippalāyana, Avirhotra, Drumila, Chamasa, Karabhājana

worshipped the ṛṣis with great reverence and devotion and asked nine questions. One relevant question was:

*yathaitām aiśvarīm māyām dustarām akṛtātmabhiḥ
taranty añjaḥ sthūla-dhiyo maharṣa idam uchyatām*

Nimi Mahārāj said, “O great saints! Please tell me how human beings, with the wrong conception of thinking the body to be the person and having no control over the sense-organs, can easily surmount the insurmountable ocean of births and deaths and threefold afflictions, caused by their aversion to the Lord, and the consequent envelopment by the Lord’s external potency of three primal qualities—mode of goodness (sattva), mode of passion (rajaḥ) and mode of ignorance (tamaḥ).” (*Sreemad Bhāgavatam* 11.3.17)

Prabuddha Muni, one of the nine Munis (realized souls) replied:

*karmāṇy ārabhamāṇānām duḥkha-hatyai sukhāya cha
paśyet pāka-viparyāsam mithunī-chāriṇām nṛṇām*

Human beings in this world first start acting by singular effort, then continue the same with wife and later on with

increased numbers of family members, by procreating children, to remove afflictions and get happiness, but the consequence is reverse. They can neither remove afflictions nor get happiness. The cause of this nescience is that they have forgotten their eternal master and are infatuated by the illusory energy and as such, wrongly think themselves to be masters and enjoyers of this world and want to lord it over others and enjoy. (*Sreemad Bhāgavatam* 11.3.18)

*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ
ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate*

The Lord said to Arjuna, “Now hear Me and understand the difference between the wise and the unwise. Being enveloped by nescience, a conditioned soul wrongly thinks the actions done by the three guṇas—primal qualities of external potency—are actually done by him. He thinks that he is the doer. This indicates an unwise person.”

(*Sreemad Bhagavad Gītā* 3.27)

The material energy has got three qualities—sattva, rajas and tamas. So there are three principal material egos. When sattva predominates, ego is denominated as sāttvik,

when *rajaḥ* or *tamaḥ* predominates it is denominated as *rājasik* or *tāmasik* respectively. Conditioned souls, being enchanted by the external potency of the Supreme Lord, think themselves the masters and enjoyers. Therefore they are eager to enjoy the world. They think that they are blessed and fortunate if they can get higher status in society and can get enjoyments of the world. They think if they can earn plenty of money, they will be happy. It is due to this conviction that they say ‘This world is ruled by money.’ For this reason unwise persons have got the aptitude to earn money by fair or foul means. Prabuddha Muni has clearly stated:

*nityārtidena vittena durlabhenātma-mṛtyunā
grhāpatyāpta-paśubhiḥ kā prītiḥ sādhitaiś chalaiḥ*

The human beings who are covetous to get money for their happiness commit a blunder because worldly wealth is always painful. If they do not get money they are unhappy as they cannot fulfill their desires. Secondly, at the time of earning money, they undergo immense tribulation and worries. Furthermore, there is extreme tension of mind to preserve the earned money. When money is lost or taken

away, they have extreme separation grief. Everything in this world is such—if we do not get we are unhappy, if we get we are unhappy, if we lose it we are unhappy. Even at the risk of life human beings are trying to earn money.

(*Sreemad Bhāgavatam* 11.3.19)

Prahlād Mahārāj instructed:

*ko nvartha-tṛṣṇām visṛjet prāṇebhyo 'pi ya īpsitaḥ
yam krīṇāty asubhiḥ preṣṭhais taskaraḥ sevako vaṇik*

Money is dearer than life. How is it possible for a conditioned soul to give up the desire for money? As for example thieves, military government servants and merchants earn money even at the risk of their lives. (*Sreemad Bhāgavatam* 7.6.10)

Therefore, money is, in the truest sense, always a cause of pain. Again, the hard earned money is spent for non-eternal requirements—construction of buildings, maintenance of family members such as wife, children and close relatives, protection of domestic animals, etc. What happiness can one get by devoting one's energy for non-eternal things? They cannot get an iota of happiness. The presiding deity of money is Lakṣmī Devī. Sree Nārāyaṇa is the enjoyer of

Lakṣmī Devī i.e. wealth. If money is offered for the service of Nārāyaṇa, it will bestow eternal benefit. But such a person, who earns money for the service of Supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa, is rarely to be found in this prison house of the material world.

Further, in case anybody argues that he can have happiness in higher worlds such as heaven etc. Prabuddha Muni has stated as follows:

*evam lokam param vidyān naśvaram karma-nirmitam
sa-tulyātiśaya-dhvaṁsam yathā maṇḍala-vartinām*

As there is rivalry between emperors of different territories and malice to superiors in this world, the same unrest and trouble is found in higher worlds, which are acquired by worldly endeavor. By enjoyment in this world, our objects of enjoyment and organs of enjoyment are decayed, likewise, in higher worlds acquired by human efforts, after the piety is exhausted by enjoyment, human beings will have to come down to this world. (*Sreemad Bhāgavatam 11.3.20*)

Therefore, O man! Give up your vanity of material ego that you are the master and enjoyer and know your eternal

welfare. Take absolute shelter at the lotus feet of a bona fide realized saint who can show you the actual path of eternal welfare.

*uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata kṣurasya dhārā
niśitā duratyayāddurgam pathastat kavayo vadanti*

Refrain from various thoughts of this world, rise up, and reinstate your actual self by giving up all non-eternal desires. Sincerely endeavor to realize God by the grace of saintly persons (realized souls). This world is like a sharp razor and very difficult to cross over. (*Kaṭhōpaniṣad* 1.3.14)

There is no way to get deliverance from worldly bondage without taking absolute shelter of a bona fide Guru to worship God. This is the advice of realized souls. As a diseased person cannot treat himself, he has to take the help of an experienced doctor. The doctor, after examination, will diagnose the disease and prescribe medicine and appropriate diet. If the diagnosis is correct, the patient will recover from the disease. Similarly, the malady of births and deaths and threefold afflictions cannot be removed by human efforts. It is essential to take shelter of a bona fide guru—bona fide spiritual doctor. An experienced doctor is

capable of treating the patient but a doctor in name, without experience, cannot treat the patient. So-called gurus, so-called sādhus, cannot have the capacity to treat the disease of enslaved jīvas—embodied souls.

*guravo bahavaḥ śanti śiṣya vittāpahārakāḥ
durlabhaḥ sadgurur devi śiṣya santāpahārakaḥ*

In Padma Purāṇa, Mahādev instructs to Pārvati—“There may be many so-called gurus in this world to squeeze money from disciples, but a bona fide guru who can remove the drawbacks and sufferings of disciples is very rare.”

Characteristics of a bona fide guru

If we want quality, we cannot get quantity. If we are keen to increase quantity, we shall have to sacrifice quality. Who is a bona fide guru? What are the characteristics of a bona fide guru? Prabuddha Muni’s instructions in regard to this:

*tasmād gurunṁ prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam
śābde pare ca niṣṇātaṁ brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam*

Therefore, enquire from Gurudeva about the best eternal

welfare with complete submission to him. A bona fide guru is endowed with two special qualities: 1) He is well-versed in authentic scriptures and 2) has realization of Divinity.

(Sreemad Bhāgavatam 11.3.21)

Sreela Viśwanāth Chakravarty Ṭhākur, in his commentary to this verse, explained the characteristics of a bona fide guru³. Gurudeva should be well-versed in the Vedas and other allied scriptures. An aspirant disciple cannot progress in his worship of God without taking shelter of a truly qualified bona fide guru, who should have the capacity of removing the doubts of disciples by reasoning substantiated with evidence from authentic scriptures. If Gurudeva is incapable of removing the doubts of the disciple, the disciple's belief in him may slacken. The second characteristic of Gurudeva is that he should have realization of the divinity. Only by theoretical knowledge of the scriptures, without having practical realization, the spiritual guide cannot give proper

3 śabde brahmaṇi vede veda-tātparyya- jñāpake śāstrāntare cha niṣṇātām nipuṇam, anyathā śiṣyasya saṁśaya-cchedābhāve vaimanasya cha sati kasyachit śraddhā-śaithilyam api sambhavet | pare brahmaṇi cha niṣṇātām aparokṣānubhava-samartham, anyathā tat-kṛpā samyak phalavatī na syāt | para-brahma- niṣṇātatva-dyotakam āha, — upaśam āśrayam krodha-lobhādy-avaśībhūtam |

advice and direction in accordance with the eligibility of the disciple. By the instruction of a guru, possessing the quality of practical realization, the disciple can have actual spiritual progress. It is to be considered here that a disciple can have the capacity to comprehend scriptural knowledge of Gurudeva by hearing from him; but how can a disciple understand whether Gurudeva has got realization of divinity or not? The Supreme Lord is transcendental reality; His absolute counterpart Gurudeva is also transcendental. Therefore, a neophyte votary cannot understand Gurudeva's realization of divinity by his own endeavor.

There are two aspects of the Supreme Lord and His absolute counterpart Gurudeva: (1) morphological aspect and (2) ontological aspect. Conditioned souls can, by their mind, intellect and sense-organs, grasp the morphological, i.e. the external aspect of the thing—the thing as it appears—but not the thing as it is. The thing as it is can be realized only by the grace of transcendental realities, through unconditional complete surrender. As for example the self-luminous sun can only be known by its own light and not by the help of other lights. We cannot see the sun in the night with the help of other lights, but when the sun rises, by accepting the grace of the sun—its light—we can see the

sun and all things of this world in the proper perspective. The Supreme Lord and His Absolute Counterpart Gurudeva are self-effulgent.

Sree Viśwanāth Chakravarty Ṭhākura, in his commentary, has given a clue to the bona fide neophyte aspirants to recognize guru by one external quality—a bona fide guru is not subdued by passions—anger, greed etc. Of course, a realized soul can use the passions for the service of the Supreme Lord and for the eternal benefit of conditioned souls, but he can never be subjugated by them. Sree Narottam Ṭhākura has advised us how the cardinal passions, except for malice, can be used for the service of Sree Kṛṣṇa:

*kāma kṛṣṇa karmārpaṇe krodha bhakta-dveṣi jane
lobha sādhu-sange hari katha moha iṣṭa-labdha-bine
mada kṛṣṇa-guṇa-gāne niyukta kariba yathā tathā*

Kāma—passion for fulfillment of desires should be diverted towards desire to serve Sree Kṛṣṇa, anger should be used against those who are hostile to devotees, greed should be employed to increase the desire to hear Harikatha from a bona fide sādhu, infatuation should be about not being able to utilize the valuable time of this precious human birth for

worship of Sree Kṛṣṇa up till now and madness should be after singing the glories of Sree Kṛṣṇa.

Even Nārada Goswāmi, out of compassion, used anger on the sons of Kuber, Nalakūvara and Maṇigrīva, to rescue them. According to the Gītā, the cause of anger is obstruction to fulfillment of one's desire. A real devotee cannot have any desire of his own except service of Sree Kṛṣṇa. So, in a pure devotee, there cannot be any possibility of the origination of such anger due to hindrance to worldly desires.

It is essential for the votary to submit to Gurudeva wholeheartedly with words, mind, sense-organs and everything for realization of divinity. Evidence from Muṇḍaka Śrīti:

*parikṣa lokān karma-chitān brāhmaṇo
nirveda māyān nāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena
tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet
samt-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham*

A brāhmin should have the knowledge that the fruits of karma are non-eternal and that eternal reality cannot be attained by karma. As such a brāhmin has no attachment to karma and therefore he takes absolute shelter at the lotus

feet of a bona fide guru. (*Muṇḍaka Śrīti* 1.2.12)

Two characteristics of a bona fide guru are mentioned in *Muṇḍaka Śrīti*—śrotriyam and brahma-niṣṭham. Interpretations of the word śrotriyam: (1) Well-versed in Śrīti śāstras—the Vedas and other allied scriptures and (2) blessed by the descent of the Divine knowledge through preceptorial channel. Brahma-niṣṭham means firmly fixed in Brahman.

Brahma-Madhva parampara

The Supreme Lord is transcendental and beyond comprehension of human intellect, mind and sense-organs. He is asamordhva, i.e. there is no one equal to Him or more than Him. So, His grace is the only means of getting Him. At the beginning of creation, when Brahmā originated from the navel of the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Lord imparted divine knowledge to him out of compassion.

*jñānam parama-guhyam me yad vijñāna-samanvitam
sarahasyam tad-aṅgam cha gṛhāṇa gaditam mayā*

I tell you the most secret of all secrets for the esoteric

realization of the divinity. Accept it and practice different forms of devotion to get the objective.

(*Sreemad Bhāgavatam* 2.9.31)

Brahmā, after realization, imparted that divine knowledge to Nārada Goswāmi and Nārada Goswāmi to Vyāsadeva—in this way the knowledge of divinity is extended through the preceptorial channel or disciplic channel. Amarārtha Chandrika⁴ has interpreted the word ‘āmnāya’ as ‘sampradāya’. The etymological meaning of sampradāya is divine knowledge descending through a bona fide preceptorial channel, where the sanctity of knowledge is correctly and completely retained. Nowadays due to prostitution of language, sampradāya is misinterpreted as sectarianism.

*sampradāya-vihīnā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ
sādhanaughair na sidhyanti koṭi-kalpa-śatair api
ataḥ kalau bhaviṣyanti catvāraḥ sampradāyinaḥ
śri-brahma- rudra-sanakā vaiṣṇavāḥ kṣiti-pāvanāḥ*

All mantras without connection to a sampradāya or not

4 title of a Beṅgālī book

received through a preceptorial channel are fruitless. Practice of such mantras for millions and millions of years will be in vain. Therefore, four bona fide sampradāyas have appeared to rescue the fallen souls in this Kaliyuga (black age) viz. Sree (Lakṣmī), Brahmā, Rudra and Sanak.

(Padma Purāṇa)

It is stated in Premeya Ratnāvali, written by Sree Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇ Prabhu that Sree, i.e. Lakṣmī Devī has accepted Rāmānuja, Brahmā has accepted Madhvāchārya, Rudra has accepted Viṣṇuswāmi, and Chaturṣaṇ (Sanak, Sanandan, Sanātana and Sanatkumar) have accepted Nimbāditya as āchāryas of the respective sampradāyas⁵.

Sree Bhaktivinode Vāṇi Vaibhav has said: “Sree Brahma sampradāya is the preceptorial channel of the devout devotees of Sree Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. In conformity to this preceptorial channel, Sree Kavi Karṇapur Goswāmi has determined guru-praṇālī (succession of gurus) in his own writing, Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā. Sree Baladeva

⁵ Ramanuja’s lineage is also called Rāmānandī or Rāmāt, Vallabhāchārya’s lineage is also called Vallabhī, and Nimbāditya lineage is also called Nimāt, Nimbārka or Nimānandī.

Vidyābhūṣaṇ, the commentator of vedāntasūtra, has firmly corroborated this. Those who disown this guru-praṇāli are considered to be the greatest foes against the verdict of Sree Chaitanya Mahāprabhu’s followers and personal associates.

“Acceptance of the system of bona fide sampradāya is absolutely necessary. Therefore, from ancient times, this acceptance of the system of bona fide sampradāya is very acutely followed by sādhus. Those who have understood the significance of the teachings of the Vedas through preceptorial channel from Brahmā, have accepted this perfect representation. Others, having diverted from this opinion, have become the slaves of various blasphemous atheistic views.”

Kavi Karṇapur, in his book Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā, has ascertained guru paramparā (succession of gurus) in this way:

*tatra mādhdhvī sampradāyaḥ prastārādatra likhyate
para-vyomeśvarasya āsīd śiṣyo brahmā jagat-patiḥ*

The preceptorial channel (paramparā) consists of Brahmā, the disciple of the Lord of the transcendental realm, followed in gradual succession by—Nārada, Vyāsadeva,

Madhvāchārya, Padmanābhāchārya, Narahari, Mādhava, Akṣobhya, Jayatīrtha, Jñānasindhu, Mahānidhi, Vidyānidhi, Rājendra, Jayadharma, Puruṣottama, Vyāsātīrtha, Lakṣmīpati, Mādhavendrapūri, Īśwarapūri, Sree Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

Sree Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi Ṭhākura in his ‘anubhāṣya’ commentary on Sree Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, remembers guru paramparā from Sree Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and prays for their grace as follows:

*mahāprabhu śrī chaitanya, rādhākṛṣṇa nahe anya,
rūpānuga-janera jīvana
viśwambhara-priyaṅkara, śrī swarūpa dāmodara,
tāra mitra rūpa-sanātana,
rūpa priya mahājana, raghunātha bhakta dhana,
tāra priya kavi kṛṣṇadāsa,
kṛṣṇadāsa-priya- vara, narottama sevāpara,
jāra pada viśwanātha āśa,
bhakta rāja viśwanātha, tāhe śraddho jagannātha,
tāra priya bhaktivinoda,
mahā-bhāgavata- vara, śrī gaurakiśora vara,
hari bhajanete jā’ra moda,
ei saba hari jana, gaurāṅgera nija jana,*

*tādera ucchiṣṭe jāra kāma,
śrī vārṣabhānavī-varā, sadā sevya-sevā- parā,
tāhāra dayita-dāsa nāma,
harijana-sevā- āśe, bhakti vṛddhi-abhilāṣe
pravāha-bhāṣyera anugata,
gaura-jana- śāstra dekhi’, sei anusārya likhi,
‘anubhāṣya’ rūpānuga-mata*

Śrotriya, brahma-niṣṭha, mahābhāgavat Vaiṣṇavas are jagat–gurus (spiritual guides of the whole world) for all time to come. By their remembrance, all objectives are attained.

(From Sree Chaitanya Vāṇī, Page No. 47, Issue No. 3 and Page No. 71 Issue No. 4 of the year 1998-99.)

❧ Essay Two ❧

Acquiring knowledge

The second special attribute⁶ of a guru is brahma-niṣṭha—having firm faith in the Brahman. The word ‘Brahman’ indicates Supreme Absolute Truth—the Personified Form of the Lord. The one whose mind is firmly fixed on the Supreme Lord is a brahma-niṣṭha guru. The two sons of Śukrāchārya, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, were the family gurus of Prahlād Mahārāj and externally they had the knowledge of the scriptures. However, Prahlād Mahārāj did not consider them as bona fide spiritual masters, as their minds were not firmly fixed on the Supreme Lord. They taught the topics of ritualistic piety (dharma), accumulation of wealth (artha), fulfillment of desires (kāma), and politics (nīti) to Prahlād Mahārāj, but not topics about devotion to Lord Viṣṇu. When Prahlād Mahārāj was in the womb of his mother, Kayādhū, Nārada Ṛṣi instructed her to engage

6 A bona fide guru is endowed with two special qualities: 1) He is well-versed in Śṛīti śāstras and 2) firmly fixed in Brahman.
(Sreemad Bhāgavatam 11.3.21)

in devotion to Lord Hari. Being satisfied with her service, when Nārada Ṛṣi offered a boon, she requested him to enlighten Prahlaḍ with the invaluable knowledge given to her. Immediately, by the grace of Nārada Ṛṣi, Prahlaḍ Mahārāj became a great devotee (mahābhāgavat) even while being in his mother's womb. Though the prevailing ritualistic ceremonial initiation was not performed, by the mercy of the personal associate of the Lord, Prahlaḍ Mahārāj became a great learned scholar (mahā-jñānī) right from his birth and is counted among the twelve great personalities (mahājana).

Only by the grace of a brahma-niṣṭha guru, having the realization of the Supreme Lord, a disciple gets the highest welfare and fulfillment of his desires. Such a guru is very rare to be found in this world. It is mentioned in Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad that one should approach a guru carrying fuel wood as an offering to him. The actual meaning of this is mentioned in Sreemad Bhagavad Gītā (4.34):

*tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

Sreela Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura has translated this as, “You may

say that it is difficult to differentiate between sacrifice of material possessions (dravyamay-yajña) and the sacrifice performed in knowledge (jñānmay-yajña). Therefore, this is My instruction to you—submit to a spiritual master who has got the direct perception of the Supreme Lord (tattva-darśi guru). Please him by bowing down to him and rendering service unto him without deceitfulness and then inquire submissively about the Absolute Truth. He will impart that knowledge unto you.” A disciple should approach the spiritual master with the mood of surrender, submissive inquiries and service attitude—these are the fuel woods for offering.

Sreeḷa Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi Prabhupād writes in his book Vaktṛtāvali Part-4: “Transcendental Truth can be understood only by the process of hearing. Usually, we judge the truthfulness of the topics that we hear in this material world with sense organs other than the ears, however the topics heard from Sree Guru cannot be understood by this process. The transcendental subjects are beyond the perception of the sense organs, hence such efforts to understand them with our materially bewildered sense organs are foolish. They are as futile as the attempts of an ox tied by six cubits long rope to eat grass thousands

of miles away or as the efforts of a dwarf to touch the moon. It is unwise to waste time in such meaningless efforts. In our present state, we do not have the eligibility to enter into such topics. It is also impossible to understand these topics by mundane reasoning, therefore whatever is heard attentively from the spiritual master is to be understood only by surrender (praṇipāt), submissive inquiry (paripraśna) and rendering service (sevā).

“Praṇipāt: Praṇipāt means to hear attentively. The topics heard from guru-pāda-padma are beyond the comprehension of our senses and thus can be understood by process of submissive hearing alone.

“Paripraśna: The words of honest inquiry submitted at the feet of the spiritual master is called paripraśna. While inquiring, it is not appropriate to have any intention of not accepting guru’s reply. To make an inquiry with a skeptical mood is not paripraśna, nor is the deceitful inquiry with the false conception that ‘I am the knower of everything.’ Further, inquiring repeatedly due to difficulty in accepting the truth is also not considered as paripraśna.

“Whatever words I have heard from the lotus-lips of Gurudeva are those that Kṛṣṇa Himself reverberated in the heart of Brahmā, repeated recitation of which can award

deliverance. They are only to be inquired submissively. We do not have any capability to do anything more to know them. This knowledge cannot be acquired by any means other than surrender, attentive listening and service attitude. Surrender and a faithful approach to such topics make one eligible for hearing.”

Considerations for accepting a guru

As per Jaiva Dharma (Chapter 20) by Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura: “The qualities of a bona fide guru (sad-guru) and a disciple are thoroughly mentioned in the book Sree Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (1.23.64). Only a person with pure conduct and faith is qualified to become a disciple and only that person who is endowed with pure devotion, who knows the devotional conclusions and is of spotless character, simple, not greedy, free from māyāvāda philosophy, and expert in all activities is qualified as sad-guru. A brāhmaṇa having these virtues and respected in the society can be guru of other social orders (varṇas). In the absence of such a brāhmaṇa, a virtuous person of any other varṇa is also eligible to become a guru. The essential implication of all these considerations

is that, any person knowledgeable of kṛṣṇa-tattva⁷ can be accepted as a guru, irrespective of his social or religious class (varṇāśrama). Getting a brāhmaṇa with such qualities as a guru is a convenient acceptance for those persons with a temperament of belonging to a particular elevated varṇa. Factually, though, only a competent devotee can become a guru.

“The provision for testing the guru and disciple as well as the determination of suitable time, are also given in the scriptures. The significance of this is that guru bestows mercy upon the disciple only when he perceives the disciple as qualified, and when the disciple has faith, understanding guru to be a pure devotee.

“There are two kinds of gurus: initiating spiritual master (dīkṣā-guru) and instructing spiritual master (śikṣā-guru). One has to accept initiation and receive instructions pertaining to Deity worship (archana) from dīkṣā-guru.

7 Regardless of whether one is a brāhmaṇa, sanyāsi, or śūdra, he is eligible to become a guru if he is fully conversant with the science of Sree Kṛṣṇa (Chaitanya Charitāmṛta Madhya 8.127). One who is expert in the science of Sree Kṛṣṇa, regardless of the social order he may belong to, including śūdra and outcaste, is to be accepted as an ācārya. Anyone who ignores this principle and accepts a guru solely on the basis of social position will be ruined. (Prema Vivarta 11.16-17).

Dīkṣā-guru is one, whereas śikṣā-gurus can be many. Both dīkṣā-guru and śikṣā-guru can impart spiritual instructions.

“Before accepting someone as a guru, he is to be examined for his proficiency in scriptural knowledge and realization of the Supreme Reality. Such a guru is certainly capable of giving instructions about the Absolute Truth.

“Normally, one should not give up the dīkṣā-guru. There are two circumstances however, in which he can be abandoned. First, if the disciple accepted the guru without examining his knowledge of the Absolute Truth and his Vaiṣṇava qualities, he can be given up with the consideration that he is not capable of performing his responsibility. There are many evidences for this in the scriptures:

*yo vyakti nyāya-rahitam anyāyena śṛṇoti yaḥ
tāv ubhau narakam ghoram vrajataḥ kālam akṣayam*

A person who acts as an āchārya but gives false instructions that are opposed to the Vedic literature (sātvata-śāstras) and a disciple who listens to such false instructions will both suffer terrible hell for an unlimited period of time.

(Nārada Pañcharātra)

*guroṛ aṇy avaliptasya kāryākāryam ajānataḥ
utpatha-pratipannasya parityāgo vidhīyate*

One who is absorbed in the enjoyment of sense objects, ignorant of his duties, and follows a path other than devotion should be given up, even if he were a guru.

(Mahābhārata Udyoga-parva 179.25)

*avaiṣṇava upadiṣṭena mantreṇa nirayaṁ vrajet
punaś cha vidhinā samyag grāhayed vaiṣṇavād guroḥ*

One goes to hell if he accepts mantra from avaiṣṇava guru, that is, one who is attached to women for sense gratification and is a non-devotee. Therefore, accept mantra again from a Vaiṣṇava guru following the scriptural injunctions.

(Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 4.144)

“The second instance in which one may reject the guru is if he becomes a māyāvādī or envious of Vaiṣṇavas due to unholy association (asat-saṅga). However, if he is not a māyāvādī or envious of the Vaiṣṇavas or is not attached to sinful activity, it is not proper to give him up just because his knowledge is meager. In that case, one should still respect him as guru and with his permission, approach another

Vaiṣṇava who is more knowledgeable, serve him and take devotional instructions from him.”

Platform speaker cannot become guru

Simply instruction of mantra is not dikṣā; the process by which Divine Knowledge is realized is called dikṣā. Knowledge of one’s relation with the Supreme Lord is Divine Knowledge. That Knowledge can only be obtained by submission to the lotus feet of a guru.

*divyaṁ jñānaṁ yato dadyāt kuryāt pāpasya saṅkṣayam
tasmāt dikṣeti sā proktā deśikais tattva-kovidaiḥ*

Translation by Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi Ṭhākura: “Since Divine Knowledge awakens one’s relation with the Supreme Lord and vanquishes all sinful activities (the sin, root cause of the sin and ignorance) from their root, the realized souls identify this process as dikṣā.”

(Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 2.9, quoted from Viṣṇu-yāmala)

Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi Ṭhākura said the following about a sad-guru: “A Vaiṣṇava could be accepted as a guru, or even an avaiṣṇava could also be called

as a guru. I shall take shelter of a guru who is cent percent engaged in the service of the Supreme Lord, otherwise considering him as an ideal, I will not engage myself cent percent in the service of Lord Hari. If I am fortunate, I will receive the shelter of the lotus feet of such a guru who is engaged in the service of the Supreme Lord every moment.

*āpani āchari' dharma jīvere śikhāya
āpane nā kaile dharma śikhāna nā yāya*

One should teach devotional service by practicing it himself. Unless one practices himself, he cannot teach it to others.

(Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 3.20-21)

“A platform speaker or professional priest cannot become guru. They think, ‘I have read in an advertisement that I can get more money by doing a sweeper job than by delivering discourses on Sreemad Bhāgavatam. Therefore, I shall stop delivering discourses on Sreemad Bhāgavatam and apply for the job of a sweeper at once.’ For a platform speaker, reading Sreemad Bhāgavatam is just one among many other material duties he has, viz. ten minutes for standing, fifteen minutes for eating, twenty minutes for gossiping etc. If serving

Sreemad Bhāgavatam is his only duty, then he will serve the Supreme Lord with every step he takes, every morsel he eats, and with his every breath. A stipend holder or contractor cannot explain Bhāgavat. So refrain from approaching the professional priest; see whether he devotes his time fully to the Bhāgavat or not. When one does not serve the Supreme Lord constantly, he will endeavor for material objects on the strength of the Holy Name; committing sins on the strength of the Holy Name—*nāmbale pāpa buddhi*—is the greatest offense.”

In his book *Vakṛtāvali* Part-3, Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Prabhupād writes: “Merely having the designation of a scholar of all the scriptures (*purāṇa-tīrtha*) does not imply that one is living according to the ideal of Bhāgavatam. Also, the relationship between a speaker of Bhāgavatam and the listener is not the same as that between a student and a teacher in a school or a college. A teacher who explains the subject in a most pleasing manner is considered the best teacher, immaterial of his personality and conduct. However, such an example does not suffice for a Bhāgavatam speaker. A person who speaks Bhāgavatam has to be a devotee of the Supreme Lord himself. If he has material attachments and greed for wealth and fame,

even though he might delight the audience as a speaker of Bhāgavatam, he is quite far from being a devotee of the Supreme Lord. One cannot get the actual benefit (devotion to the Absolute Truth) by listening Bhāgavatam from such a person.”

Guru leads by example

*āchinoti yaḥ śāstrārtham āchare sthāpayaty api
svayaṁ ācharate yasmād āchārya stena kīrtitaḥ*

One who is thoroughly well-versed with the conclusions of the scriptures, who instructs others by the dint of his own exemplary behavior and has realization of the Absolute is famous as āchārya. (*Vāyu Purāṇa*)

*yad yad ācharati śreṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janaḥ
sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokas tad anuvartate*

Whatever actions a great man performs, common men imitate. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, the world pursues. (*Sreemad Bhagavad Gītā 3.21*)

*āpane āchare keha, nā kare prachāra
prachāra karena keha, nā karena āchāra*

‘āchāra,’ ‘prachāra,’ – nāmera karaha ‘dui’ kārya
tumi—sarva-guru, tumi jagatera ārya

Sanātana Goswāmi speaks to Haridās Ṭhākura: “Some follow scriptural injunctions but do not preach, whereas others preach but do not follow in their life. You simultaneously perform both duties in relation to the Holy Name by your personal behavior and by your preaching. Therefore, you are the spiritual master of all and you are the most exalted in the world.” (*Chaitanya Charitāmṛta*, *Antya-līlā* - 4.102-3)

Those who do not practice devotion and engage in the five irreligious activities cannot perform the role of an āchārya. The five irreligious activities in Kali Yuga are very clearly indicated in *Sreemad Bhāgavatam* (1.17.38-41):

sūta uvācha
abhyarthitas tadā tasmai sthānāni kalaye dadau
dyūtaṁ pānaṁ striyaḥ sūnā yatrādharmas̐ chatur-vidhaḥ
punaś cha yāchamānāya jāta-rūpam adāt prabhuḥ
tato ‘nṛtaṁ madam̐ kāmam̐ rajo vairam̐ cha pañcamam
amūni pañcha sthānāni hy adharma-prabhavaḥ kaliḥ
auttareyeṇa dattāni nyavasat tan-nideśa- kṛt

Sūta Goswāmi said: “Mahārāj Parikṣit, being petitioned by

the personality of Kali, gave him permission to reside in places where the four irreligious activities namely gambling, intoxication, illicit association with women⁸ and animal slaughter⁹ is performed. When the afflicted Kali asked for something more (even after getting these four places), the merciful King gave him permission to reside in gold because wherever there is gold there is also falsity, ego, lust for illicit connection with women, enviousness (out of the mode of passion) and enmity. Kali, the craftsman of irreligion, thus started to live in those five places by the directions of King Parīkṣit, the son of Uttarā. Therefore, whoever desires progressive well-being, especially kings, religionists, public leaders, and the spiritual master, should never come in

8 Association with women is of two types – illicit connection with women and over attachment to one's own wife - both of them are the places of unrighteousness (Kali). The false lineages (apasampradāyas) where illicit relations with women are allowed are not the place for religion, but the residence of Kali. Sreeman Mahāprabhu has instructed this to the entire world through Chota Haridās.

9 Animal slaughter does not necessarily mean to kill an animal personally. This can happen in several other ways. According to Manu saṁhitā (5.51): anumantā viśasitā nihantā kraya vikrayī, saṁskartā chopahartā cha khādakaścheti ghātakāḥ – a person who supports animal killing, one who distributes, trades, cooks, serves, and eats the meat are all slaughterers, and share the same level of sin.

contact with the aforementioned irreligious principles.”

Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura has written in his commentary, ‘vivṛti’—tejīyasām na doṣāya vahneḥ sarva-bhujo yathā—no sin can touch a devotee, just like anything that comes in contact with fire is immediately devoured. The Supreme Lord is an Absolute Enjoyer. Therefore, everything is an object of His enjoyment. The activities of Paramhaṁsa devotees like Sreela Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi are not to be imitated by the conditioned souls. Sincere devotees, considering themselves ineligible for accepting Bhagavat-prasād like betel leaves (tāmbul), offer due respect from a distance. They consider themselves as servant of the servant of Sree Gaurasundar, the embodiment of the mood of separation (vipralambhātānu). Thus they follow the instruction—yāvatā syāt svanirvāha svī-kuryāt tāvadartha-vit ādhikye nyūnatāyām cha chyavate paramārthataḥ¹⁰—of Sree Rūpa Goswāmī. Accepting this teaching in their heart, they relinquish the desires of sense enjoyment and mundane designations.

¹⁰ The bare necessities of life must be accepted, but one should not superfluously increase his necessities. Nor should they be unnecessarily decreased. One should simply accept what is necessary to help one advance spiritually.

Religious self-instruction is dubious

It is written about guru in Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volume 5, page 576 as follows: “Guru in Hinduism, is a personal spiritual teacher or guide who has himself attained spiritual insight. From at least the time of the Upaniṣads (ancient commentaries on the sacred scriptures), India has stressed the importance of the tutorial method in the religious instruction. In the educational system of ancient India, knowledge of the Vedās (sacred scriptures) was personally transmitted through oral teachings from the guru to his pupil. Classically, the pupil lived at the home of his guru and served him with obedience and devotion.

“Later, with the rise of the bhakti movement, which stressed devotion to a personalized Deity, the guru became an even more important figure. He was not only venerated as the leader or founder of the sect but was also considered to be the living embodiment of the spiritual truth and thus, identified with the deity. In at least one sect, the Vallabhāchārya’s, the devotee was instructed to offer his mind, body and property to the guru. The tradition of willing service and obedience to the guru has continued down to the present day. The guru is frequently treated with

the same respect paid to the deity during worship and his birthdays are celebrated as festival days.

“Religious self-instruction is considered dubious. It is the guru who prescribes spiritual disciplines and who, at the time of initiation, instructs in the use of the mantra (scared formula) to assist in disciple’s meditation. The example of guru who, though human, has achieved spiritual enlightenment leads the devotee to discover the same potentialities within himself.”

Āchārya—different and non-different from Supreme Lord

There are certain sects wherein guru is worshipped as the enjoyer God. They perform worship of guru alone and not Supreme Lord. Their philosophy is not in accordance with devotional scriptures and is indeed abominable. In the eleventh Canto of Sreemad Bhāgavatam, guru or āchārya is ascertained to be a non-different manifestation of the Supreme Lord¹¹. The anubhāṣya by

11 āchāryaṁ mām vijānīyān navamanyeta karhichit
na martya-buddhyāsūyeta sarva-deva- mayo guru

The Lord said, “O Uddhava, You should know the guru to be identical with Me. You should not disrespect or envy him, thinking him an ordinary man

Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi in Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 1.46-7 about the actual implication of this needs special attention:

“The Supreme Lord Himself manifests as an āchārya to a disciple. In the dealings of an āchārya, who is also known as āśraya-vigraha (the manifestation of the form of the Lord of whom one must take shelter), there are no activities other than service to the Lord. If one falsely poses himself as an āchārya, but does not have the temperament of servitorship to Lord Hari, then he is disqualified from being an āchārya. The existence of the quality of one-pointed devotion to the Supreme Lord in an āchārya symbolizes his being a personal manifestation of the Supreme Lord. Materialists always remain dissatisfied with the material enjoyments, and envy even the pure conduct of an āchārya. In fact, āchāryadev is the Absolute Counterpart of the Supreme Lord, and therefore enviousness towards him will deprive one from the grace of the Lord and His associates and will lead to catastrophe. In reality the spiritual master is a servitor of Sree Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya, yet a disciple should know him as a

because he is the representative of all the demigods.”
(Sreemad Bhāgavatam 11.17.27)

plenary manifestation of Sree Gaurasundar¹².

“Guru is the servant and Kṛṣṇa is the object of service. However, it is not true that there is no difference between them in other aspects. Like the impersonal philosophers, according to whom there is no existence of variety and individual peculiarity in the Brahman realized state, the Vaiṣṇava āchāryas do not carry the opinion of non-difference between guru and Kṛṣṇa in all aspects. Indeed they advise ‘achintya-bhedābheda-tattva’, which establishes everything to be simultaneously one with and different from the Supreme Lord. In this regard Sree Raghunāth Dās Goswāmi Prabhu said, ‘mukunda-preṣṭhatve guruvarāṁ smara – one should always think of the spiritual master in terms of his intimate relationship with Mukunda (Sree Kṛṣṇa).’

“Sree Jīva Goswāmi Prabhu has written in Bhakti-sandarbhā (213):

*śuddha bhaktā śrī guroḥ śrī śivasya cha
bhagavatā saḥ abheda dṛṣṭim tat
priyatmatvenaiva manvante*

¹² yadyapi āmāra guru chaitanyera dāsa, tathāpi jāniye āmi tānhāra prakāśa (Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 1.44)

A pure devotee’s observation of the spiritual master and Lord Śiva as being one with the Supreme Lord exists in terms of their being very dear to the Lord, but not as identical with Him in all respects.

“Following the footsteps of Sree Raghunāth Dās Goswāmi and Sree Jīva Goswāmi, Sree Vishwanāth Chakravarty Ṭhākur has written in his prayers to the spiritual master:

*sākṣād dharitvena samasta-śāstrair
uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ
kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya
vande guroḥ śrī-charaṇāravindam*

All the revealed scriptures declare that a disciple should accept the spiritual master to be identical with the Supreme Lord and sadhus also have such an understanding. However, simultaneously, being an Absolute Counterpart of the Lord, Sree Guru is a very dear and confidential servant of Sree Kṛṣṇa Chaitanyadeva. I, as his eternal servant, worship his lotus feet.

“Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas therefore meditate upon the āśraya-vigraha (Sreela Gurudeva) in the light of his being the personal associate of the Supreme Lord. In all the ancient

literatures of devotional service and in pure devotional hymns and songs, the spiritual master is always considered either one of the confidential associates of Sreemati Rādhārāṇī or a manifested representation of Sreeman Nityānanda Prabhu.

“One who gives instructions about devotional service (Hari bhajana) is the instructing spiritual master (śikṣā guru). There are two types of instructing spiritual masters: bhajanānadi mahānta guru, a highly advanced person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service, and chaitya-guru, one who invokes the disciple’s spiritual consciousness for performing favourable devotion. The instructions in the science of devotion are differentiated in terms of the objective and subjective ways of understanding. Spiritual master, who has the power to bestow Kṛṣṇa, enriches the disciple with the knowledge of his relation with the Supreme Lord (sambandha-jñāna) and thus awakens him to the activities of devotional service. Having thus received the grace of the initiating spiritual master, devotional activities that the disciple executes delightfully are known as ‘abhidheya’. Śikṣā guru, the personified form of abhidheya, is therefore non-different from dīkṣā guru, who bestows sambandha-jñāna. Both are āśraya-vigraha Sree Gurudeva.

Anyone who foolishly discriminates between them commits an offense¹³.

“Sree Sanātana Goswāmi is the initiating spiritual master, for he bestows one the shelter of the lotus feet of Madana-mohana. Even though one may be unable to travel to the land of Vṛndāvana due to forgetfulness of his relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he can get all spiritual benefits by the mercy of Sanātana Goswāmi. Sree Rūpa Goswāmi is the instructing spiritual master and he awards the service of the Lotus Feet of Sree Govinda and His dear associates.”

Gurudeva is said to be non-different from Lord Hari for he is dear most to Sree Hari and is His topmost servitor. He serves Sree Kṛṣṇa with all his senses in all respects and engages others also in His service. He never takes the position of an enjoyer. Some consider the spiritual master to be independent from the Lord, as an enjoyer, and offer

13 The spiritual master is non-different from ‘Sree Kṛṣṇa’ - is the deliberate opinion of all revealed scriptures. Sree Kṛṣṇa Himself delivers His devotees in the form of spiritual master. One should know the instructing spiritual master to be the Personality of Sree Kṛṣṇa. He manifests Himself as the Supersoul as well as an advanced devotee. Living entities cannot visually experience the presence of the Supersoul. Therefore, Sree Kṛṣṇa Himself appears as an advanced devotee taking the position of an instructing spiritual master. (Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 1.45, 47, 58)

Tulsi at his feet. Their dealings with guru are anti-scriptural and thus utterly condemned. Even to Sree Rādhārāṇī who is the integral potency of Sree Kṛṣṇa and the fountainhead of guru tattva, Tulsi is offered in Her hands and not to Her Lotus Feet.

Kṛṣṇa reveals to the surrendered

Kṛṣṇa bhakti cannot be propagated without Kṛṣṇa's empowerment.

kali-kālera dharma—kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana

kṛṣṇa-śakti binā nahe tāra pravartana

prema-parakāśa nahe kṛṣṇa-śakti bine

'kṛṣṇa'—eka prema-dātā, śāstra-pramāṇe

The fundamental religious system in the Age of Kali is the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Unless empowered by Kṛṣṇa, one cannot propagate the saṅkīrtana movement. Without being especially empowered by Him, one cannot manifest ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa, for He is the only one Who awards ecstatic love. That is the verdict of all revealed scriptures. (*Chaitanya Charitāmṛta Antya-līlā 7.11, 14*)

If Brahmā, the creator of the world, who has a life span of two parārdhas (311.04 trillion human years), could not understand the Supreme Lord, Nandanandan Sree Kṛṣṇa, with his own ability and took Him to be an ordinary cowherd boy, what to speak of others! Only after Brahmā surrendered completely and attained the grace of Sree Kṛṣṇa, could he understand Him and His glories. The description of Brahmā's bewilderment pastimes (Brahma-mohan-līlā) by Sree Vedavyāsmuni in the tenth canto of Sreemad Bhāgavatam is to teach that the conditioned souls of this world cannot know and propagate the glories of the Supreme Lord with their own efforts. Brahmā offered his prayers:

*jānanta eva jānantu kiṁ bahūktyā na me prabho
manaso vapuṣo vācho vaibhavaṁ tava gocharaḥ*

O my Lord, What more can I say with my false vanity? Those who, puffed up of being a scholar, think that they know Your glories, let them think that way. But Your glories are beyond the reach of my mind, body and words.

(Sreemad Bhāgavatam 10.14.38)

Supreme Lord Hari is free from the modes of material nature and devoid of material qualities ('harir hi nirguṇaḥ sākṣāt puruṣaḥ prakṛteḥ paraḥ' vide Sreemad Bhāgavatam 10.88.5) and so are His devotees. Only a surrendered soul, by the mercy of Supreme Lord and His associates, can know Their glories; a foolish unsundered soul cannot (praṇatābhigamyam mūḍhairavedyam). The differences in the realization of the Lord and His devotees are due to the differences in the degree of one's surrender. However, one who has attained even the slightest realization of the Supreme Lord can never say that his realization is complete and ultimate.

Only the Supreme Lord is fully knowledgeable, others are not. An ignorant person cannot sing the glories of the Lord. The merciful Lord accepts prayers when offered with humility, however, He never accepts the prayers of an unsundered soul. Sreela Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura has written in the very beginning of his Śaraṇāgati hymns:

*śrī-kṛṣṇa-chaitanya prabhu jīve doyā kori'
swa-pārṣada swīya dhāma saha avatari'
atyanta durlabha prema karibāre dāna
śikhāya śaraṇāgati bhakatera prāṇa*

*ṣaḍ-aṅga śaraṇāgati haibe jāhāra
tāhāra prārthanā śune śrī-nanda-kumāra*

Out of compassion for the fallen souls, Sree Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya Prabhu came to this world with His personal associates and divine abode to teach surrender (śaraṇāgati) and to freely distribute ecstatic love of God, which is ordinarily very difficult to obtain. This śaraṇāgati is the very life of the true devotee. The youthful son of Nanda Mahārāj, Sree Kṛṣṇa, hears the prayers of anyone who takes refuge in Him by the six-fold śaraṇāgati¹⁴.

Dear most associates of Sree Kṛṣṇa

After the disappearance of Sree Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Swarūpa Dāmodar Prabhu, Ramānanda Rāya and the six Goswāmīs, Srīnivās Achārya, Narottama Dās and Śyāmānanda Prabhu, a dark age descended on the world of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism due to the lack of capable preachers in the line of Mahāprabhu's pure

¹⁴ Six-fold śaraṇāgati: humility, dedication of the self, acceptance of the Lord as one's only maintainer, faith that Sree Kṛṣṇa will surely protect, execution of only those acts favorable to pure devotion, and renunciation of conduct adverse to pure devotion.

devotional path. As a result, numerous heretical sects or apasampradāyas became prevalent. Totārāma Dās Bābāji, a famous bābāji who belonged to Navadvīpa, named thirteen such heretical sects:

*āul, bāul, kartābhajā, neṛā, daraveśa, sāi
sahajiyā, sakhībhekī, smārta, jāta-gosāñi
atibāṛī, chuṛādhārī, gaurāṅga-nāgarī
totā kahe ei teror saṅga nāhi kari*

The members of these sects claimed that their teachings were in line with that of Mahāprabhu. Educated upper class Beṅgālī society, seeing the abominable unrighteous acts of these heretical sects, lost their faith in Mahāprabhu's religion. They came to identify Mahāprabhu's religion with the uneducated, the lower classes and immoral. The living entities, deluded by the Lord's illusory potency and not understanding the doctrines of pure devotion, started to preach sense gratification as love. Consequently, several heretical sects took birth. The bewildered souls do not have the ability to protect themselves or others from this plight by their own efforts. The most munificent incarnation Sree Chaitanya Mahāprabhu took pity on these bewildered

persons and in order to reclaim them for His path of transcendental divine love sent two of His eternal associates, Sreela Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura and Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī, into this world.

Sreela Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura appeared in Ulā - Bīrnagar village of the Nadiā district in the 352nd year after the birth of Sree Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Sunday, Sept. 2, 1838; the tithi was Śukla Trayodaśī of Bhādra. Accepting Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura as his father, Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura appeared on Friday, February 6, 1874 (Māgh 25, 1280 Beṅgālī, 387 Gaurābda), at 3:30 P.M. The house of his appearance in Purusottama dhām was constantly filled with the sound of Harināma. It was Kṛṣṇa Pañchami of the month of Māgh.

In his song book Gīta-māla, Sreela Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura gives his eternal spiritual identity as Kamala Mañjarī, the servant of Sree Rūpa Mañjarī. Sreela Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura wrote more than a hundred books in Beṅgālī, Sanskrit and English languages with the goal of defeating all the unorthodox views opposed to the doctrines of pure devotion. Thus he established the unequalled value of the religion of pure love enacted and preached by Mahāprabhu. Such a display of empowerment could not be possible

were he not a direct associate of Supreme Lord. Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi Ṭhākur established 64 centres all over the world and propagated the mission of Sreela Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur extensively by his order. It is written by Vyāsadeva in the Padma-Purāṇa, ‘hy utkale purusottamāt’, the pure message of devotion to Sree Kṛṣṇa would spread out of Jagannāth Purī.

Only after the appearance of Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi Ṭhākur in Jagannāth Purī, did the preaching of Kṛṣṇa-bhakti spread throughout the entire world. It is not an exaggeration to say that Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi Ṭhākur made impossible possible by empowering his associates with transcendental energy. This is known to everyone. The associates of Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi Ṭhākur revealed his spiritual identity as Sree Vārṣabhānavi Dayita Dās and Nayanamaṇi Mañjarī, the follower of Sree Rūpa Mañjarī.

Sreela Saraswatī Goswāmi Ṭhākur appeared with a natural symbol of sacred brāhmin thread around his shoulder. When he was a baby of six months, it was the time of the Ratha-yātra festival; that year Sree Jagannāthdev stopped for three days in front of Sree Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur’s house and blessed the baby with His garland. Such unworldly

incidents left everybody in great astonishment. While staying in Mayāpur, the appearance place of Mahāprabhu, he undertook a vow of chanting a billion (hundred crores) of Holy Names. It was also in Mayāpur that he had a divine vision of Pañcha Tattva, Sree Jagannāth Dās Bābāji Mahārāj, Sree Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur and Sree Gaura Kīśora Dās Bābāji Mahārāj. They ordered him to propagate the message of Mahāprabhu's pure loving devotional service and consoled him, saying, "Do not fear. Countless people are waiting for you to call for them."

Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi Ṭhākur wrote in his preface to the Jaiva-dharma: "Sreela Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur is an extremely dear associate of Sree Chaitanya Chandra. In the course of time, when those who preached the desires of Chaitanyadeva had left this world to enter the Lord's eternal pastimes, the sky over Beṅgāl slowly darkened, covered by the thick clouds of sensual enjoyment and false renunciation. The sky was covered and the world was bereft of the rays of light coming from the saṅkīrtan propagated by Sree Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. One by one, the sun, the moon and the unlimited stars of that sky faded from view, leaving only the occasional flash of lightning to disrupt the unending darkness of ignorance. Almost three hundred

fifty years after the appearance of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Sreela Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura appeared in Bīrnagar village of the Navadvīp district to illuminate the Gauḍīya sky.”

Śiśir Ghosh, the father of Sree Tuṣārkaṅti Ghosh, the editor of Amritbazar patrika, seeing the transcendental energy of Sreela Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura called him “The Seventh Goswāmī”. Sreela Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura published the book Sree Navadvīp-dhām Mahātmya and Sreela Saraswatī Ṭhākura revived the annual circumambulation of Navadvīp dhām, thus spreading the glories of the dhām everywhere and set into motion the fulfillment of Mahāprabhu’s message:

*pr̥thivī-paryanta āche jata deśa-grāma
sarvatra sañchāra haibeka mora nāma*

My name will pervade every village and country in the world. (*Chaitanya Bhāgavat* 3.4.126)

The contribution of Sreela Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura and Sreela Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura to the propagation of the message of Sree Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is unparalleled. The followers of Gaurāṅgadev all over the world are infinitely

indebted to them for this. Every Indian is proud to see the glories of India distributed. Initially, many persons became mistakenly opposed to the mission of Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi Ṭhākura, when their insignificant selfish motives became hindered. Over time they regretted this and proclaimed loudly that if Sreela Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmi Ṭhākura were not to appear in this world then such a matchless rank of Gauḍīya sampradāya would not exist.

Only the most fortunate souls attain the company of the dear most associates of Sree Kṛṣṇa, realize their transcendental nature, develop faith in their teachings, and get the inclination to follow in their footsteps.

(Translated from the original Beṅgālī article published in Sree Chaitanya Vāṇī, Page No. 166; Issue No. 9, 1997-98.)

~ Author ~

His Divine Grace Sreela Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Goswāmī Mahārāj made his appearance as a divine infant in 1924 in Assam, India, on Rāma-navami, the most auspicious appearance day of Bhagawān Lord Rāmachandra. He was adorned with the exceptional qualities of humility, obedience to superiors, detachment from worldly objects and a strong inclination towards eternal truth from his childhood.

After completing his Masters Degree in Philosophy in 1947, he became attracted by the divine personality of his Spiritual Master, His Divine Grace Sreela Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Goswāmī Mahārāj, and fully dedicated his life to his service. Sreela Mādhava Goswāmī Mahārāj was one of the foremost followers of Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur Prabhupād, the illustrious preceptor of the pure devotional bhakti school. Sreela Prabhupād would refer to him as a person of ‘Volcanic Energy’ due to his unflagging enthusiasm, full competence in a variety of services, unflinching resolve, diligence and success in all endeavors

entrusted to him. He founded the devotional institution, Sree Chaitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh, which has over twenty branches in India alone.

Sreela Tīrtha Goswāmī Mahārāj excelled in following all the devotional traits of Sreela Mādhava Goswāmī Mahārāj and, through his untiring service attitude, marked his valuable contribution to the activities of the mission. He very soon became the Secretary of the organization. In 1961 he was awarded sannyās, the vow of renunciation. After the disappearance of Sreela Mādhava Goswāmī Mahārāj in 1979, Sreela Tīrtha Goswāmī Mahārāj was appointed his successor as āchārya of the Maṭh.

Sreela Tīrtha Goswāmī Mahārāj took charge of expanding the mission that was entrusted to him by his revered Gurudev. His single-pointed dedication to his Guru was seen in all his activities. Wherever he went he only sang the glories of his Guru. “Example is better than precept” is his way of preaching. He is known for not deviating even one iota outside of the four corners of the prescripts of the holy scriptures.

For more than six decades, Sreela Tīrtha Goswāmī Mahārāj has been engaged in preaching the gospel of Sree Chaitanya Mahāprabhu’s universal divine love. His

loving affection, charming personality and pure devotional conduct attracted the hearts of all who came in contact with him. Consequently, innumerable persons all over the world have taken his shelter and have been initiated into the all-embracing path of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

In 1997, at the request of Sreela Bhakti Promode Purī Goswāmī Mahārāj, he set his holy foot prints outside India. His preaching tour took him to various countries including UK, Holland, France, Spain, Italy, Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Russia, Ukraine, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, Hawaii and throughout the continental US.

Sreela Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Goswāmī Mahārāj's preaching programs over the past years have included many interesting dialogues with prominent Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Hindu and Baha'i theologians, in such diverse settings as universities, interfaith groups, churches, Hindu temples and a wide variety of metaphysical and private educational centers. All are invariably won over by his gentle and affectionate nature, combined with his resolute faith in Guru-Vaiṣṇava-Bhagawān. He has also spoken on the sublime teachings of Sree Chaitanya Mahāprabhu on many radio and television programs, including a thought provoking interview on BBC radio in 2000, which was

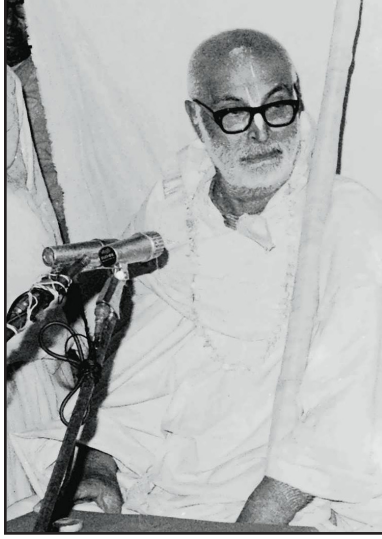
broadcast worldwide.

By dint of his all-loving nature and devoutness to the service of Guru and Vaiṣṇavas, he has become the role model for āchāryas of many Gauḍīya institutions. During his 50th sannyās anniversary celebration in 2011, over fifty āchāryas of various institutions gathered to get his blessings—a number not seen elsewhere in this century.

In addition to his role as āchārya of Sree Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh, Sreela Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Goswāmī Mahārāj, presently the senior-most in the Vaiṣṇava community, serves as the beloved āchārya of GOKUL (Global Organization of Krishnachaitanya's Universal Love), which he founded in 1997. He also serves as President of the World Vaiṣṇava Association (WVA).



It is impossible for an ordinary person of this world to comprehend the true glories of Sreela Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Goswāmī Mahārāj. However, the statements by his highly esteemed Gurudeva and other prominent disciples of Sreela Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur Prabhupād enunciate his unparalleled spiritual standing and exemplary character.



“Don’t think about the future, my appointed successor is my most beloved disciple; he is extremely humble and will preach more than I.”

**Sree Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Goswāmī Mahārāj (1904-1979),
Founder Āchārya of Sree Chaitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh**

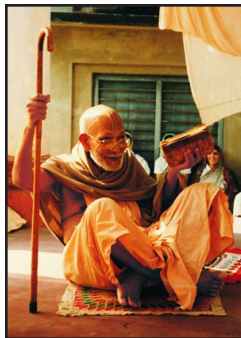


“You have a readymade āchārya! Tirtha Mahārāja is an āchārya from childhood. We don’t have to make him.”

Sreele Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Goswāmī Mahārāj (1895-1988)
Founder Āchārya of Sree Chaitanya Sārawat Maṭh



“Puḡyapād Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāj is an embodiment of “tṛṇād api” śloka by Sreeman Mahāprabhu. At present, there is no such effulgent Sun in the Gauḍīya sky. I doubt if there will be such in future. You are fortunate for having his association.”



Sreele Bhakti Pramode Purī Goswāmī Mahārāj (1898-1999)
Founder Āchārya of Sree Gopīnāth Gauḍīya Maṭh



“After the generation of our god-brothers (disciples of Ṭhākura Prabhupād), presently it is very rare to find an elevated Vaiṣṇava like Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāj. If you want to learn the conduct of a Vaiṣṇava, then approach him. Consider it fortune, even if you have to undergo a debt to serve such an exalted Vaiṣṇava.”

Sreele Bhakti Saurabh Bhaktisār Goswāmī Mahārāj (1902-1995)

Founder Āchārya of Sree Nityānanda Gauḍīya Maṭh

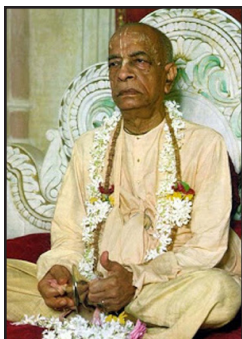


“He has all the Vaiṣṇava qualities of humility, submissiveness etc, as quoted in the scriptures. He is a great sādhu. One who surrenders unto him will definitely be benefitted.”



Sreele Bhakti Kumud Sant Goswāmī Mahārāj (1921-2012)

**Founder Āchārya of Sree Gaurāṅga Maṭh, Sree Chaitanya Āśram
and Sree Gaur Saraswat Santa Gauḍīya Maṭh**



“It would help me if someone educated and qualified like you could go abroad with me.”

Sreela A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmi Mahārāj (1896-1977)

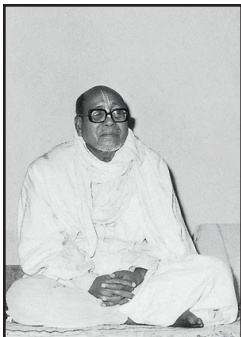
Founder Āchārya of ISKCON



“Sreela Tīrtha Mahārāj is an utmost Vaiṣṇava and I know he is the personal associate of Sree Gaurahari.”



Sreela Bhakti Śaraṇ Trivikram Mahārāj (1909-2006)



“Tirtha Mahārāj is the tape-recorder of Mādhava Mahārāj. He is non-different from Mādhava Mahārāj except for his external appearance.”

Puṇyapād Kṛṣṇa Keśava Prabhu (1914-2002)

—Other English Titles by the Author—

Sree Chaitanya: His Life and Associates

A Taste of Transcendence

Sages of Ancient India

Śuddha Bhakti: The Pure Devotion

Affectionately Yours

Daśāvatāra: The Ten Manifestation of Godhead

Harikatha and Vaiṣṇava Aparādha

The Holy life of Sreela B. D. Mādhava Goswāmī Mahārāj

Nectar of Harikatha

Path of Pure Devotion

The Philosophy of Love

Droplets of Nectar Vol. 1 & 2

Message of Bhagavad Gīta

Hṛd rog kāma

Kārtik Handbook

∞ Sanskṛt ∞

Pronunciation Guide

Vowels

a	like the a in organ or the u in but
ā	like the a in far, but held twice as long as short <i>a</i>
i	like the i in pin
ī	like the i in pique, but held twice as long as short <i>i</i>
u	like the u in push
ū	like the u in rule, but held twice as long as short <i>u</i>
ṛ	like <i>ree</i> in <i>reed</i>
ḷ	like <i>l</i> followed by <i>ṛ</i> (<i>lṛ</i>)
e	like the <i>e</i> in they
ai	like the <i>ai</i> in aisle

o	like the <i>o</i> in <i>go</i>
au	like the <i>ow</i> in <i>how</i>

Consonants

k	as in <i>kite</i>
kh	as in <i>Eckhart</i>
g	as in <i>give</i>
gh	as in <i>dig-hard</i>
ŋ	as in <i>sing</i>
d	as in <i>dove</i> , but with the tongue against the teeth
dh	as in <i>red-hot</i> , but with the tongue against the teeth
n	as in <i>nut</i> , but with the tongue against the teeth
p	as in <i>pine</i>
ph	as in <i>uphill</i> (not pronounced like <i>f</i>)

ch	as in <i>chair</i>
j	as in <i>joy</i>
jh	as in <i>hedgehog</i>
ñ	as in <i>canyon</i>
ɸ	as in <i>tub</i> , but with the tongue against the roof of the mouth
ɸh	as in <i>light-heart</i> , but with the tongue against the roof of the mouth
ɖ	as in <i>dove</i> , but with the tongue against the roof of the mouth
ɖh	as in <i>red-hot</i> , but with the tongue against the roof of the mouth
ɳ	as in <i>nut</i> , but with the tongue against the roof of the mouth
t	as in <i>tub</i> , but with the tongue against the teeth
th	as in <i>light-heart</i> , but with the tongue against the teeth
b	as in <i>bird</i>
bh	as in <i>rub-hard</i>

m	as in <i>mother</i>
y	as in <i>yes</i>
r	as in <i>run</i>
l	as in <i>light</i>
v	as in <i>vine</i>
h	as in <i>home</i>

ś (palatal)	as in the <i>s</i> in the German word <i>sprechen</i>
ṣ (cerebral)	as the <i>sh</i> in <i>shine</i>
s (dental)	as in <i>sun</i>

Special Letters

ṁ (anusvāra)	a resonant nasal like the <i>n</i> in the French word <i>bon</i>
ḥ (visarga)	a final, echoed h-sound: <i>aḥ</i> is pronounced like <i>aha</i> ; <i>iḥ</i> like <i>ihī</i>